

Family-member migration and the psychosocial health outcomes of children in Moldova and Georgia

Citation for published version (APA):

Vanore, M. T. (2015). *Family-member migration and the psychosocial health outcomes of children in Moldova and Georgia*. [Doctoral Thesis, Maastricht University]. Boekenplan.
<https://doi.org/10.26481/dis.20150617mv>

Document status and date:

Published: 01/01/2015

DOI:

[10.26481/dis.20150617mv](https://doi.org/10.26481/dis.20150617mv)

Document Version:

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Please check the document version of this publication:

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Propositions

“Family-Member Migration and the Psychosocial Health Outcomes of Children in Moldova and Georgia”

1. Transnational family scholars often use the term “left behind” to describe children with migrant kin who remain in the country of origin, yet evidence from both qualitative and quantitative studies of the phenomenon challenge the negative connotations the term carries.
2. The mobility choices and trajectories of men and women are likely to be shaped by different factors, which in turn can shape the post-migration environments in which children live.
3. Children living in transnational families are not one homogenous group; characteristics of the child, his/her migrant kin, and the caregiver expose children to different risks and sources of resilience.
4. The relationship between the migration of close kin and the psychosocial health of children in Moldova and Georgia is generally marginal.
5. The migration of a parent or other close family member is not as meaningful a factor in shaping child psychosocial health outcomes as are factors such as being called names by a caregiver or living in a politically-unstable region.
6. Frameworks that relate the development of child psychosocial health to the family or caregiving environment generally assume nuclear-family settings, which limits understanding of how children raised in extended family care environments may be affected by the migration of non-parent kin.
7. Most studies of children in transnational families have observed children at only one point in the migration and family life cycle; great insight could be gained by observing how children and their families negotiate migration processes over time.
8. Rather than targeting children with migrant parents as one homogenous group, programmes or policies aimed at children “left behind” could be enhanced by recognising and targeting specific cross-sections of the child population that have specific vulnerabilities or sources of risk.
9. “You can catch more flies with honey than with vinegar.” (*English idiom*) Such a message is just as applicable to policy as it is to our own daily interactions.